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THE LIGONIER ECHO,

A Weekly Newspaper Devoted to the Interests of the
People of Ligonier Valley.



I. M. GRAHAM & SON, Publishers,

St. Clair St.

LIGONIER, PA.

Historic
Laughlintown. Pa.

J. G. Young



LAUGHLINTOWN, PA.

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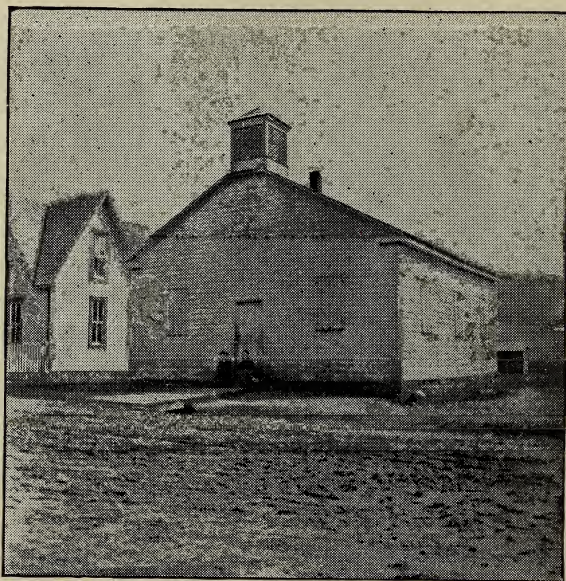
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VILLAGE OF LAUHLINTOWN.

GOODSPEED 9-16-66 # 12032 400 PC 2744



OLD SCHOOL HOUSE.

BY JAMES GARFIELD YOUNG.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORIC LAUGHLINTOWN.

The quaint and peaceful little town of Laughlin is set like a gem in the midst of a tumbled vale of rugged beauty at the veriest base of the romantic old Laurel Hill and characteristic of the valley in which it is situated its beauty and history deserves more than passing note.

Over its site the immortal Washington trod and here and on the surrounding hills our ancestral fathers wrestled with the deceptions of the wily Indians.

Many a pioneer settler forfeited his life as a result of engaging in those periodical frays and here though at times there was frightful scenes of carnage, the dusky warriors were oftentimes repulsed and driven back to their teepes and wigwams in the mountains fastnesses.

By the vim and energy of our hardy ancestors the land that is now tilled by our farmers was cleared and improved and eventually the Indians became extinct so far as this portion of the country was concerned.

The persevering Whites having gained this foothold were placed on a firm basis and as the pamorama of years rolled made advancement of such a nature that Laughlintown and vicinity, as well as the greater part of Ligonier Valley, is now considered both beautiful and fertile.

Our charming village is bounded on the east by the Laurel Hill mountains, on the north by Mount McClain, and on the south Mitchell's Heights rears its stately eminence. To the westward one perceives Chestnut Ridge dimly looming up through the hazy distance.

The discovery of this picturesque and romantic site may be traced back to the time of General Forbes expedition against the French at the head of the Ohio river. Colonel Ward led the first party of soldiers across the Laurel Hill and down through the beautiful valley beyond, passing over the present site of Laughlintown September 6, 1758.

But it was not until almost 39 years thereafter, or June 7, 1797, that the town was plotted by Robert Laughlin, who christened it East Liberty which was changed with the establishment of the postoffice to Laughlintown. Robert Laughlin, it is believed, came over Laurel Hill with Forbes' army and remained hereabouts after the army's return to the east.

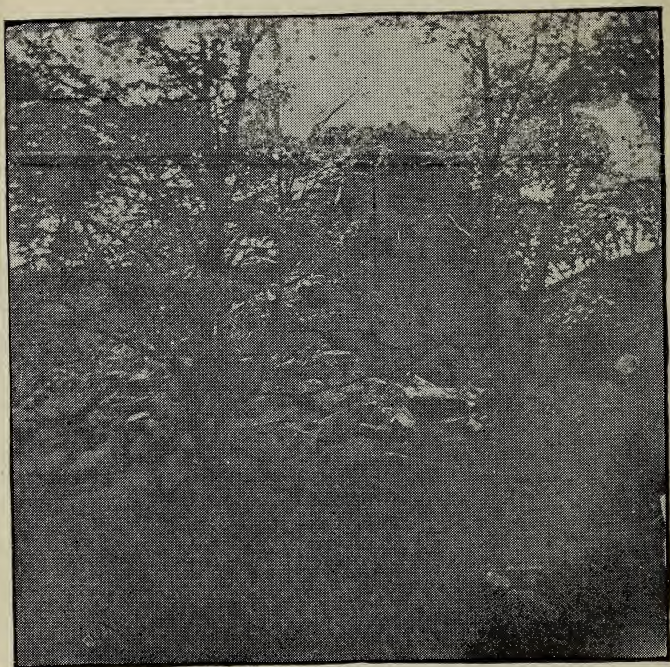
At an early date he was operating a mill on Mill Creek a short distance below the Hermitage, the old home of General Arthur St. Clair. Sometime later Mr. Laughlin came in possession of land surrounding the village which holds his name in perpetuation.

The present Laughlintown is a village of about 150 inhabitants. It contains two churches, the United Brethern completed in August 1897, and the Disciple or Christian erected in the early 80's. Its commercial realm is constituted of three stores, a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, a wagonmaker shop, a saddlery and a boarding house. Besides this, it contains a fine private museum, the property of Armor Brothers and here hundreds of curiosity seekers call to view the large collection of old relics.

As a summering point it is first class, being near the mountain and having an abundance of scenic beauty, pure air and good water.



TROUT RETREAT NEAR LAUHLINTOWN.



WASHINGTON FURNACE.

CHAPTER II.

CHARCOAL FURNACES.

Our village was a furnace town of some importance. Westmoreland so called because it was the first furnace erected in Westmoreland county was situated one mile south of town. It had been completed some three years before Laughlintown was plotted. Christopher Lobengier & Company built the furnace and after a few years operation sold it to John Probst who operated it until 1802. In 1809 Messrs. Johnston and McClurg erected Washington furnace on Furnace Creek above Laughlintown. It continued in interrupted operation until about 1856, and though part of the stack is yet standing, the typical furnace village which once clustered on the beautiful grass grown knoll nearby has been entirely deserted and has now passed into utter oblivion.

Mathiot & Cummins erected California furnace in 1853, but owing to business complications in which the company shortly afterward became involved, the enterprise was a failure and the plant closed down but a few years after its completion. It was situated about two miles south of Laughlintown. Colonel John D. Mathiot, a member of the above firm was one of Laughlintowns most illustrious citizens. He died here in 1866.

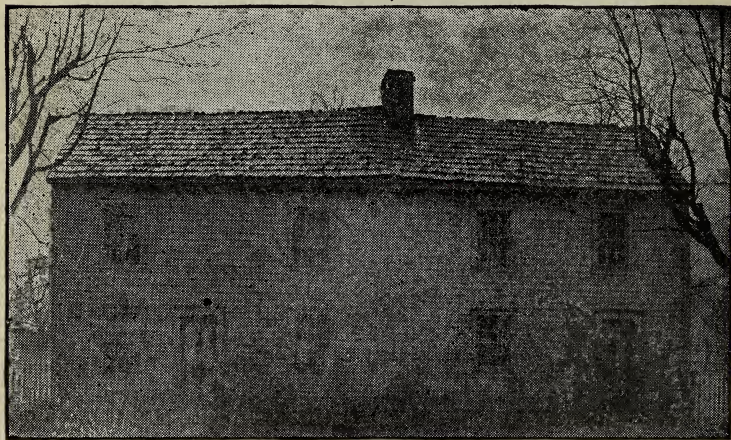
Until the autumn of 1898 when the stack was torn down and the stones used to form the abutments of the Laughlintown county bridge the furnace plant was in a state of almost perfect preservation and was visited by many curiosity hunters.

While the furnaces were in blast Laughlintown was Ligonier Valleys trade center and all was business activity, but with discardment of stage coaches and conestogas and the blowing out of the furnaces it realized into quietude, but is a very pretty, as well as a very interesting and historic place.

Since the 50's the iron ores of this section have remained untouched, but the time may come when they will again be utilized and these old places once more made the scene of business prosperity.



LOOKING EAST ON PITTSBURG AND
PHILADELPHIA TURNPIKE.



OLD GEARY HOUSE.

CHAPTER III.

THE GEARY FAMILY IN LAUGHLINTOWN.

Richard Geary, father of the late ex-Governor John White Geary, was once a resident of Laughlintown. The Geary family was of Scotch Irish descent, but for several generations Mr. Geary's ancestors had been born in America. Geary first saw the light of day in Franklin county, Pennsylvania. He was ably educated and a man of refinement. His wife, Margaret White, was born in Washington county, Maryland, and was a woman of many good traits. The fruit of their marriage was four sons, the youngest of which was governor of Pennsylvania from January 15, 1867, to January 21, 1873.

Mr. Geary was an employe at the old Westmoreland furnace mentioned in the preceding chapter and the house which he occupied in Laughlintown is still standing and in a reasonably good state of preservation. It is a two story structure weatherboarded and painted. It is located on the Main street and is one of the most historic objects of interest about this staid old furnace and turnpike town as it is almost a century since the contractors turned it over to the owners fit and ready for occupancy.

Lehmer & Gardenier conducted a general store here during the 30's and George W. Phillippi held the office of justice of the peace in the 80's and 90's. It has however served the greater portion of its time as a dwelling house and as such it is used at the present day. And here when the last war whoop of the Redmen had scarcely ceased to

reverbrate through the surrounding forests and when the settlers were just beginning to leave off that huge ornament, the trusty flint lock rifle which had for so long been universally carried to the field during the week and to the old log church in which they worshiped on Sundays, then the father of the future director of this great commonwealth cast his lot here among our forefathers. While living in Laughlintown an infant son was taken ill and died. After the remains were prepared for burial a few simple prayers were said and with tears falling upon the pathetic casket conveyed over the hill to Everglade cemetery and there laid away by the sorrowing and sympathizing villagers.

Sometime afterward Mr. Geary removed to Mount Pleasant township where he taught a select school and where his fourth son, John White Geary saw the light of day December 30, 1819.



CONESTOGA WAGON.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TURNPIKE ERA.

About the year 1818 the Philadelphia and Pittsburg turnpike, which in Westmoreland county passed through Laughlintown, Ligonier, Youngstown, Greensburg and several smaller places reached completion. Being at the western base of the Laurel Hill where the majority of wagoners stopped over night before ascending the mountain, Laughlintown soon became an important turnpike station, and here was to be found hatter shops, tailor shops, saddlery shops, stores, and in fact representatives of almost every trade of that day.

Before the pike was made the state road from Philadelphia to Pittsburg was the route over which persons traveled and merchandise was conveyed and prior to this period the Washington and Forbes road served the people.

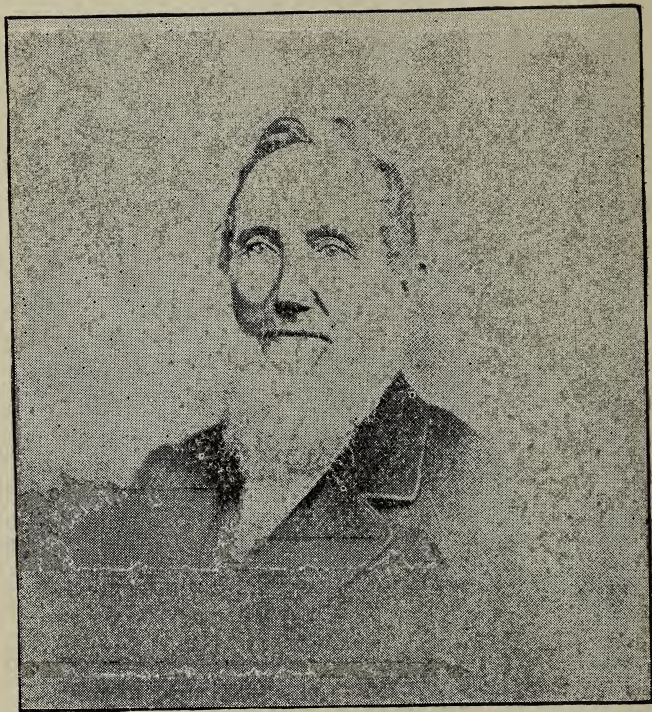
Both of these highways passed through the present site of Laughlintown, but travel did not become heavy until the Philadelphia and Pittsburg turnpike was thrown open in 1818 and the history of Laughlintown as a turnpike station dates practically from that time.

Many noted men have traversed this old and noted roadway. Among the number were: Henry Clay, Thomas Corwin and Presidents Harrison, Jackson and Taylor. The latter executive while making a political tour of the country a short time previous to his election stopped in Laughlintown where a large assembly of people had gathered in order to see and shake hands with the future president.

Benjamin Johnston, father of John Johnston, of Laughlintown, hauled a wagon load of silver from the Philadelphia mint to Pittsburg. This precious freight was put up in kegs and sealed with the government's stamp and a company of sixty soldiers sent along to guard it.

Laughlintown although now without liquor license and with only one boarding house, was, while the turnpike prospered well supplied with taverns. At the east end of town in what is known as the Yellow House, so called on account of the color it is painted, William Curry presided at an early day. Mr. Curry sold his tavern to Joseph Naugle who conducted it for many years thereafter. As early as 1825 a tavern was operated in a building which occupied a site of Jonas Noel's present residence. One, Shopwood kept it at that date and after his departure a Mr. Craver continued the business. The Compass Hotel in the central part of town saw these proprietors: Benjamin Johnston, Israel Brown, Robert Armor, Sr., and Philip Miller, while in the brick house on the east side of Furnace Creek, George Lehmer, Robert Elder, Widow Rhoades, Joseph Nicewonger, Fred Septer, Robert Caldwell and Alexander Caldwell, served the traveling public. The following persons presided over the "White Swan Inn" on the west side of Furnace Creek: John M. Burdette, William Eckert, Joseph Park, George Hays, Israel Brown, George Carns and John Brubaker. Brubaker was here until 1857, when the house was destroyed by fire.

For thirty-five years the pike enjoyed a reign of prosperity. The canal had injured it somewhat, but traffic was heavy until the Pennsylvania railroad was completed as far west as Latrobe when it was practically abandoned and in Ligonier Valley is now kept up by the township.



COL. SAMUEL ELDER.

CHAPTER V.

LAUGHLINTOWN CENTENNIAL.

Laughlintown celebrated her one hundredth anniversary Monday, June 7, 1897. Although there was a discouraging shower of rain in the morning which caused many to remain away some 2,500 persons were present and the affair was a pronounced success. From far and near the visitors came and here old residents, friends and relatives met one another and joined in making the celebration an event long to be remembered. The old town had on a gay holiday dress, being appropriately decorated with flags, bunting, flowers, laurel and pine. Five pretty arches spanned the Main street, one of which was a double arch across the Square, and upon which there was many favorable comments.

About 8 o'clock the crowd began to assemble and in the early forenoon the Latrobe Sextette under the leadership of John C. McMillan arrived and rendered some of their best music. Soon after the Ligonier Cornet Band came into town discoursing some favorite selections and the birthday party became a merry one.

At 1:30 p. m. the parade was formed as follows:

Latrobe Sextette

Ligonier Cornet Band

G. A. R. Post

Mechanicsburg Coon Band

Old Time Wagons

Wagons with Young Ladies

Wagon with Old Wind Mill

Pack Horse Train

Old Conestogas

Valley Rangers

Horseback Riders

I. B. Mathews, of Speedwell Cross Roads, was chief marshal of the big parade. He was assisted in his work by the following aids: Messrs. Aaron Marks, Judson Naugle, Joseph Moore, Jacob Byers and David B. Smith. These gentlemen handled the big procession very successfully and the parade was one of the most pleasing features of the celebration. The parade formed near the Armor house from where it moved up the old pike to the Meganniss road turned and proceeded westward to Edward Shafer's farm and returning to the point of starting disbanded. A thousand or more persons joined in the parade and the procession was almost a mile long.

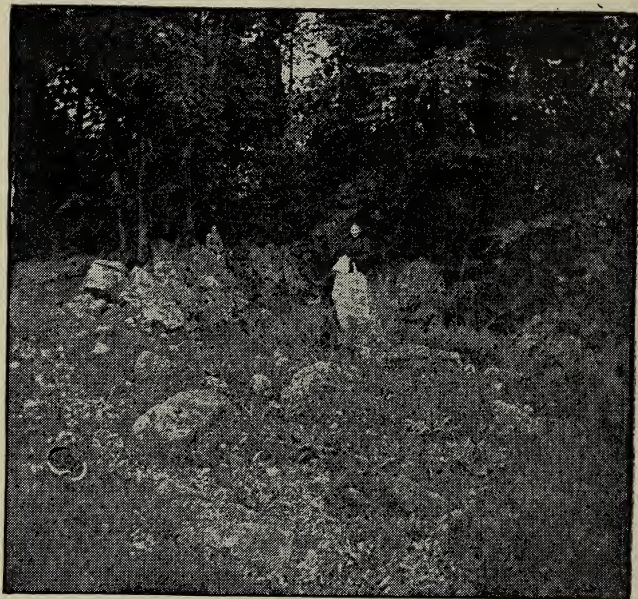
In the Valley Rangers' carriages rode the following survivors of that old Laughlintown Militia Cavalry company: Captain Chambers S. Moore, Saltsburg, Pa.; James Mathews, Stahlstown, Pa.; Henry Kimmel, Ligonier, Pa.; William McKlveen, Ligonier township, Pa.; John Johnston, of Laughlintown, and William Crawford, of Donegal, Pa. Other members living at that time were: Benjiman Johnston, of Ligonier, and Isaac Weaver, of Cook township.

Following is the list of names of the anniversary committee as read by John B. Singer, president of the meeting: Messrs. Alexander Caldwell, President, Iowa; Chambers S. Moore, Saltsburg; Frank Curry, Philadelphia; John Curry, Poland, Ohio; John C. Ewing, Tyrone, Pa.; West D. Morley, LaGrange, Mo.; John Nichols, Iowa; Joshua Brubaker, Coke-

ville, Pa.: William Curry, Pittsburg; Peter Bricker, James Cole and T. N. Buell, Derry; Absolam Darr, Lewis Louthier, Alexander Tantlinger, John Johnston, David Horner, Cyrus Wilt, Judson Naugle, Aaron Marks, Josiah Young, Frank Bitner, I. B. Mathews, G. L. Phillippi, Joseph Clark, W. B. Clark, C. L. Armor, Robert Hall, F. W. Armor, Jacob Miller, John B. Tittle, John B. Singer, Martin Campbell, Frank Shafer, Henry Smith, George B. Singer and John Armstrong, Laughlintown; H. S. Denny, Bales McColly, Michael Keffer, Rev. J. N. McCoy, Rev. W. F. Hunter, William McKlveen, George W. Scott, Henry Kimmel, Jacob O. Lowry, William Meredith, J. S. Berkey, of Ligonier.

Mr. Singer then read the address of welcome which was followed by devotional exercises which were conducted by Revs. David Shearer, W. F. Hunter and J. N. McCoy. The singing of the 100th Psalm, Long Time Ago, Glory, Glory, Hallelujah and music by the Latrobe Sextette composed the musical program. There was several recitations, after which the speakers were introduced. Jesse E. B. Cunningham, then chairman Westmoreland county Republican committee made a pleasant address and was followed by Archibald M. Hall, Ph. D. Mr. Hall was born in Laughlintown and consequently was well versed on the history of our little village and his brilliant address was very interesting.

Rev. David Shearer, a native of the old town and Colonel Samuel Elder, the oldest man in the valley each made short addresses. Colonel Elder telling of his recollections of Laughlintown from 1817 to 1897. This closed the afternoon exercises. At night there was a festival and fire works.



MOUNTAIN RETREAT NEAR LAUGHLINTOWN.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD RESIDENTS.

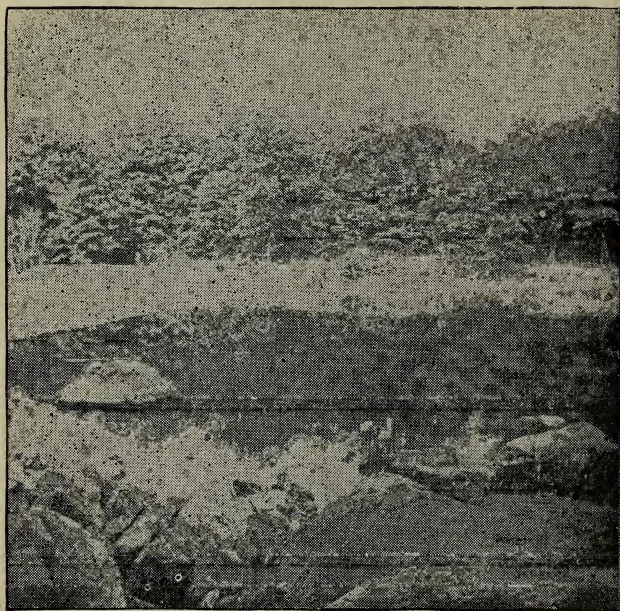
Among the old citizens of Laughlintown are notably: Alexander Tantlinger, Lewis Louther and John Johnston, all born in the village where they now reside.

Mr. Tantlinger was born August 3rd, 1820, in a log house on the Hamilton lot, west end of town, which was torn down several years ago. His father, Henry Tantlinger, a carpenter, died in Laughlintown when Alexander was quite young. His mother removed to Washington furnace and he made his home with Benjamin Park, the innkeeper, for several years and then went to Stoystown and served as an apprentice under his cousin, John Tantlinger, a saddler, working later as a journeyman saddler. He drove stages and conestogas on the Philadelphia and Pittsburg turnpike and also served throughout the civil war. He has good health at 80 years.

Lewis Louther was born January 11, 1823, in a log house which was located on the lot west of the Meginnis tannery. His father, William Louther, was a school teacher and surveyor. Mr. Louther learned the blacksmith trade and worked at it in Laughlintown, Greensburg and in the states of Ohio and Arkansas. He was also a riverman for about 20 years and has been on most the principal American waters.

John Johnston was born May 18, 1825, in the house where he now lives. His father, Benjamin Johnston, was a farmer and for a while an innkeeper conducting the Compass Hotel in Laughlintown about the opening of the nineteenth century. Mr. Johnston has lived here all his life operating the farm upon which he was born and where he yet lives.

Other residents are Henry Smith, W. J. Carns, William M. Carns, Rev. A. E. Fulton, David Scully, Josiah Young, Judson Naugle, Jonas Noel, F. W. Armor, J. C. Morley, W. H. Buell, Aaron Marks, C. L. Armor and J. W. Darr.



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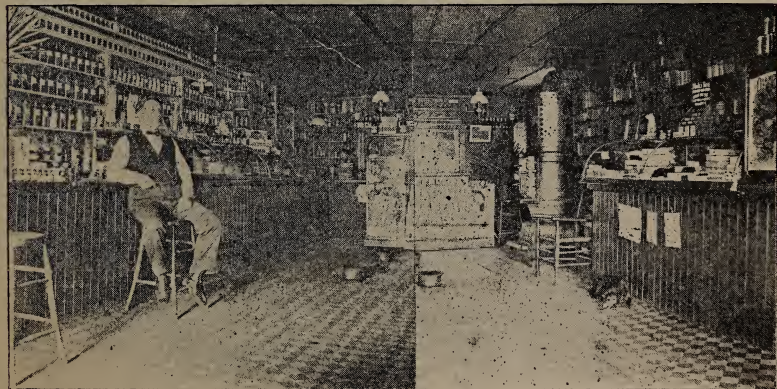
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